



VIDEO SCRIBUNG

How Whiteboard Animation
Will Get You Heard 🎧

Heard 三

Jon Air, Eric Oakland & Chipp Walters

VIDEO SCRIBING

How Whiteboard Animation Will Get You Heard

Jon Air, Eric Oakland & Chipp Walters

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Don't keep the secret to yourself.

Remember that wonderful feeling when you first watched a whiteboard animation and thought *wow*? You've got the power to make other people feel that way.

So go ahead, share this book.

The content belongs to the authors, so you can't change the content or the digital format and you can't sell it. Other than that – download it, email it, tweet it, Facebook it, pin it, post it, link to it, even print it if that's still a thing.

Be the first among your peers, and make good stuff win on the internet. Share the *wow*.

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Introduction

There was a dinosaur, a caveman and a whiteboard

This book will take you from the dank caves of prehistoric Europe to the New York Stock Exchange. We'll go to Jurassic Park to learn how to make dinosaurs, and to the tenth birthday party of Facebook.

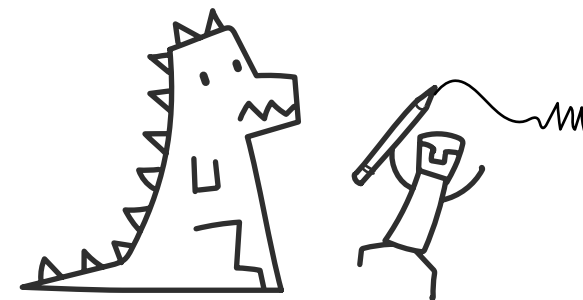
We'll meet a type of video that helps us remember things – better and for longer. We'll see how these videos are persuasive and three times more likely to be shared than a talking head. And we'll find out how just one of these videos can make you \$100,000.

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What is the video type?

Some people call it video scribing. Others like to say whiteboard animation or fast drawing. Either way, its effect is magic.

Video scribing starts with a blank whiteboard – and lets you tell your story with bold images and absorbing voiceover. It's a highly contemporary medium that has revolutionised communication for companies and individuals across the world.



But what makes a great scribe? And why is video scribing so powerful?

Drawing on expert knowledge, detailed research and a collective wealth of experience, this book provides a unique introduction to the history of scribing and what makes a great scribe video – one that will engage a viral audience and bring your message to life. We also look at how to make your scribes technically superb, eye-catching and memorable in Part 2 – a practical guide to whiteboard animation.

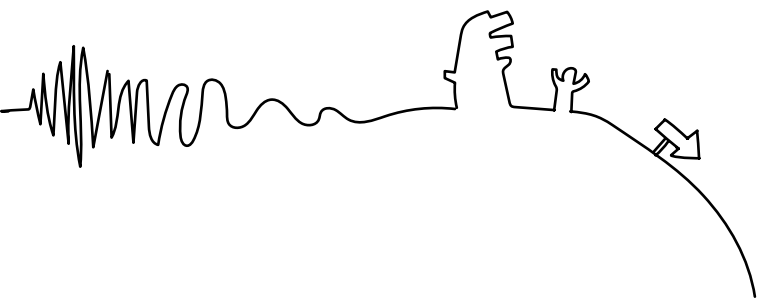
What's your story?

Communicators throughout the ages – from Zhuangzi to Jesus, Aesop to Jay-Z – have known that stories are one of the best ways to convey a message.

Scribing is a perfect medium for stories and visual metaphors, as it will, quite literally, draw in your audience and capture their interest throughout.

You might be struggling to communicate your business's unique selling point or USP. You might be dying to shout about an idea in a way that will actually make people sit up and listen. You might want to spark off a little more imagination in your class of teenagers.

Video scribing is the tool you've been waiting for. Let's find out why.



Part One

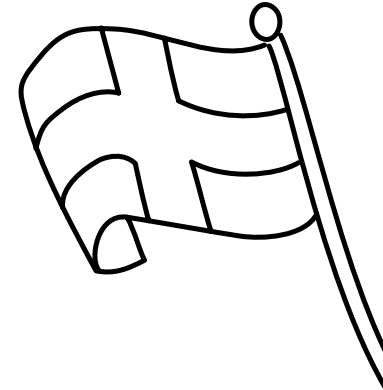
The rise of whiteboard animation



Chapter 1

What is video scribing?

(Or how to get into a fight with a Swedish politician)



“

She's become somewhat of a celebrity in the school realm¹

”

Karin Berg was like teachers the world over – passionate about her students, desperate to give them the attention they deserved, but stretched to her very limits.

Then her government in Sweden proposed changes to the education system – changes that would ramp up her workload and strip away what little time she did have.

Karin was exhausted. But she was game for a fight.

She made a short, quirky video expressing her frustration. A virtual placard. An online grrrr. It was no masterpiece, and Karin could never have guessed where it would take her.



In no time, her protest went viral in Sweden. Karin was invited to debate the proposals with the Minister for Education – live on national television. She gave him both barrels.² Later, in a 75-minute private meeting, they discussed the changes at length. Karin's follow-up video was aimed directly at members of parliament in the Riksdag.

You can find Karin's videos on YouTube.³ They are compelling viewing even if you don't have a word of Swedish.

But why? And how did she make such a splash? What were Karin's videos?

Not celebrity talking heads, slick slide presentations, or live films with famous actors.

They were whiteboard animations.

Have we met before?

Also called scribes or scribed videos, whiteboard animations show images drawn onto a whiteboard before your very eyes. They unfold in sync with a voiceover to communicate your ideas in a clear, linear narrative.

Like cartoons, scribed videos tell a story. Unlike cartoons, they are not animated in the traditional sense and don't need to be silly or end in a punchline.

Sound familiar?

That's because you've seen them before. In the series finale of *Weeds*.⁴ In 2007, when UPS explained its USP using just a man, a pen and a whiteboard.⁵ In a series called RSA Animate, where inspirational talks were made into scribe videos and went viral.⁶ And on tech blog Mashable, to celebrate Facebook's tenth birthday.⁷

Karin Berg follows in a long line of audacious scribes, from prehistory to the present day.

Just how far back does scribing go?



Chapter 2

The history of scribing

(Or how to get the President's attention when you're only 10 years old)

“

Dear President Obama. We know that you're real busy. But if you could take two minutes to watch our video, we would greatly appreciate it...⁸

”

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You're ten. You and your classmates are going to the White House. You're excited. You're fit to burst about all the famous people and places you'll see.

But the President stands you up. You're so disappointed. Do you meekly accept that 'fiscal cuts' cancelled your outing and go home?

No. If you are the children of Frontier Elementary School in Florida, you make a short but kick-ass scribe video asking Barack Obama to reschedule.

Their scribe video got them noticed. Big time. As well as getting the attention of the White House, it also got them media coverage.⁹ Quite the political coup!

It sounds revolutionary – ten-year-olds interacting directly with the President. Yet in one sense, they were doing nothing new. Way before the internet and video sharing sites, way before video itself – in fact, way back before electricity or schools or presidents – humans scribed to one another.

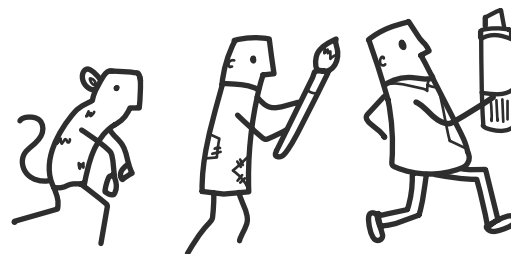
Let's go back 40,000 years.

Where to catch the best bison

10

You'll find the origins of video scribing in the dark caves of El Castillo, Spain. More than 40,000 years ago, cave paintings shared stories of hunting, ceremony and survival.

For millennia, people used images to share the secrets of being human and staying alive. First came the cave artists, then came the scribes – an educated few using a stylus tool to document history with images, and eventually, words. Soon no respectable king, council or religion was without one.



Pressed by printing

While text is a comparatively recent invention, it soon caught on. And with the arrival of the printing press, scribing became a niche market.

As technology advanced, the printing press turned into the typewriter, which turned into the computer, which birthed the internet, the most prolific tool ever known for spreading knowledge fast and wide.

The tool that lets ten-year-olds talk with presidents.

Return of the scribes

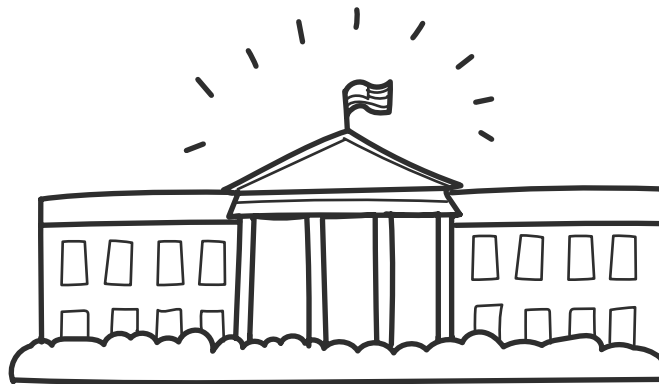
So today's scribes have all this at their fingertips: images, text, speech, the internet and thanks to some clever people in the 1880s, video. Put it together and what have you got? Video scribing – a technology that harnesses 40,000 years of human ingenuity.

Following on from breakthrough campaigns by UPS and the RSA, whiteboard animation has become a contemporary form of communication for the world's largest companies on every continent.

It is used in corporations, classrooms, campaigns and creative studios.

The stylus may have gone, the quill is now rather passé, but armed with a marker or a mouse, video scribing allows you to communicate complex ideas simply and to send those ideas across the world at speed.

Even, to get the attention of the White House.



Chapter 3

The two types of scribing

(Or how to give one of the world's best speakers a helping hand)

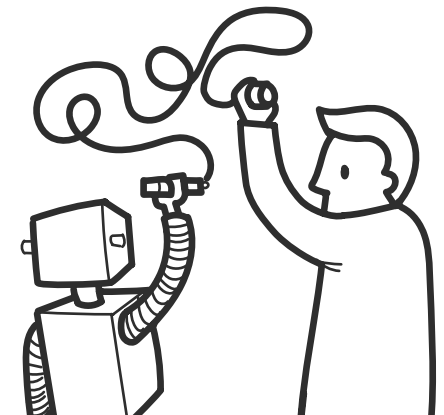
Sitting at your computer right now, you can scribe to the world. You can go bespoke or home-grown. Commission cutting-edge professionals or build your very own scribe at your desk, today.

Much of this choice is thanks to one man. Ken Robinson. Sir Ken Robinson, the world-renowned educationalist, who inadvertently set off an avalanche of whiteboard animation.

Author of ten books, winner of prestigious awards, holder of countless honorary degrees, Sir Ken is the spokesperson to our culture about the problems in education.

It's no surprise that when he delivered a talk about schools killing creativity, it became the most watched TED talk of all time.¹⁰

Yet that was just the beginning.



The RSA in the UK took just a portion of his talk and animated it. They played Robinson's audio over a hand scribing illustrations on a whiteboard. The video, with its recycled narration, spread like wildfire.

It had half a million views in its first week.

At the time of writing, this small, incomplete hand-drawn excerpt of Sir Ken's talk has been watched over *11 million times* on YouTube alone. More than twice the number of views of the original talk on the same site.¹¹

Hand-drawn scribes

The RSA made a number of scribe videos for their RSA Animate series on philosophy, civilisation, psychology and world economics. Their animators adapted a technique that emerged in the early nineties, whereby a team of artists draw out a creative story, recording their work as the narrative develops.

We call this whiteboard animation although it is more of a time-lapse technique.

RSA Animate fired people's imagination and shot whiteboard animation to the forefront of creativity.

New companies were quick to realise its potential.

Truscribe was one of the first.¹² It built a successful business around whiteboard video. Based in the US, its highly skilled team of writers, artists and video professionals work with Fortune 100 companies to create thousands of hand-drawn whiteboard videos every year.

Automated for everyone

What about making your own?

Sparkol, a UK company, created VideoScribe – easy-to-use software that allows you to create your own whiteboard animations.¹³ Launched in 2012, it produces attractive videos very quickly, and opens up video scribing to those who can't afford professional services.

Scribe videos have been used both to lobby governments, and by governments to explain policies. They have been made to pitch business ideas, win contracts, teach lessons, campaign for change and – wonderfully! – even propose marriage.

Their potential is endless. Whether you pay for a professional service, or take matters into your own hands, the accessibility of scribing means that you can share your message loud and clear.

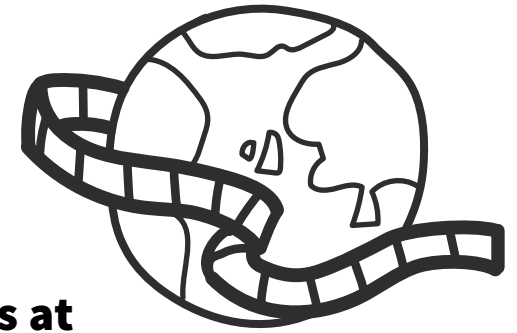
It's the style that made a brilliant speaker even more brilliant. But what is it exactly that makes scribe videos so compelling?



Chapter 4

Why scribing works

(Or how a video has an impact in half the world's countries at once)



“

With this portal I am able to reach thousands of employees who will be able to get the training they need to make a difference in the world. My scribe is going to be a signature piece of our marketing for this initiative and will be seen by thousands of people ¹⁴

”

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Whiteboard animation is startlingly inclusive. It speaks to the eyes and the ears. It can break down barriers to understanding, conveying complex information very simply.

Which is why CARE Canada turned to video scribing.

The international humanitarian agency has its work cut out supporting women, children, and families in over 80 countries. Its workers find themselves facing wildly different

scenarios – post-conflict zones, natural disasters, famine-stricken communities and poverty of all kinds – and the team themselves come from all over the world.

CARE Canada needs its people to share knowledge, stories and training across the planet. But how do you teach people thousands of miles apart? How do you ensure that people with such different backgrounds and challenges are all on the same page?

As part of their e-learning initiative, CARE Canada used a scribe video to tell their signature story. Far from being alienated by irrelevant and distant communications, the video enabled CARE's team to relate to and understand their role in the wider organisation. Though far away, video scribing allowed them to engage with its core.

Anticipation and completion

So how does whiteboard animation work? What is its magic?

One of the secrets of video scribing is the concept known to artists and illustrators as viewer completion. Two dots and a curve are instantly seen as a smiling human face – despite the lack of detail. The viewer's mind completes the image.

Scribe videos also stimulate viewer anticipation – they ask the audience to guess what is being drawn next. This continual anticipation creates surprise and rewards the brain with dopamine.

The anticipation of images goes a long way to explaining the mesmerizing effect of whiteboard videos – why they create such enjoyment, learning and longer engagement.

As their artwork is revealed, scribes demand your contribution and your curiosity.

Dino DNA and *Weeds*

And once you're hooked, you can start to grapple with complicated ideas. Scribes are perfect for presenting difficult concepts to a general audience.

John Hammond, the bearded genius behind dinosaur resurrection in Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, knew about the relationship between audio and visuals. You'll recall the scene where he explains how to extract DNA from an amber-preserved mosquito.

Although not technically a scribe video, the narrated animation is testament to the power of the audio and visuals working together. The presentation is straightforward enough for children to follow and yet communicates a mind-boggling idea.

Fast forward to the final season of Showtime's comedy-drama *Weeds*. How do you sum up your protagonist's dramatic journey over the seven preceding seasons – in just a few seconds? The show used a whiteboard animation for the opening credits, depicting the entire through the medium of video scribing.

First rate production from much smaller scope

Scribe videos will wow your audience. They will also surprise your accountant. You can produce a high quality product with significantly less outlay than you would with other types of animated or live action videos. This allows you to make vast savings in terms of budget, timescale and resources.

Every day, we ogle our TVs and computers, sucked into the best videography Madison Avenue has to offer. These advertisements are created by hundreds of people with seemingly limitless budgets.

Anyone who tries to compete with the big players using a hand-held video camera, non-professional actors and a copy of Premiere faces an impossible task – and the results are often seriously second-rate.

But scribe videos – they're judged differently.

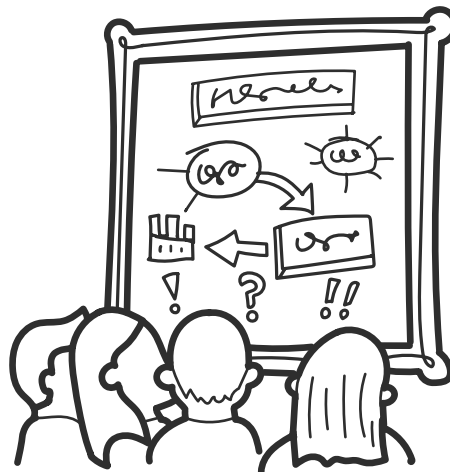
We've found that quality scribes produced on a low budget compare very well with more conventional forms of messaging.

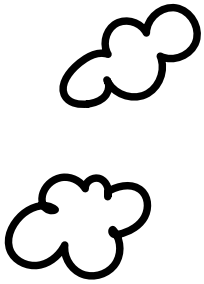
Or rather, they don't compare. They are judged in a category all their own. Scribes are so different, such a departure from the norm, that viewers tend to accept whiteboard animation for what it is.



There's something mesmerizing about a drawing coming to life. People are drawn to scribe videos like a crowd gathering around a portrait artist at the fair.

And when scribe videos work – in over 80 countries around the world – they amplify a message and make a big difference to people who really need it.





Chapter 5

Scribing research

(Or how it's handy when the studies and stories buddy up)

When Sean James proposed a scribe video for his client's homepage, he was taking a risk. He didn't know about the research behind whiteboard animation. He had never used VideoScribe before.

Running a small media company, Sean's margins were tight, and any new technology needed to pay for itself, yesterday. But he decided it was worth a shot.

Even in his most optimistic mood, he could not have predicted the result.

Simply adding a scribe video to the client's landing page lowered the bounce rate by a third.

The scribe increased the average time that visitors stayed on the page by 50%.

And that was not the best part.

By adding the scribe video, Sean managed to double his client's revenue to \$200,000.

One video. \$100,000.

The psychology behind the pizazz

Sean James didn't know it, but the research backs him up.

In twenty years of research, cognitive psychologist Richard E Mayer and his colleagues found combining graphics with a voiceover to be far and away the most effective way of communicating information.

In fact, Mayer concluded that multisensory learning improves problem solving by 50-75%.¹⁵

Say, for example, you divide a class in three. The first group of students are taught using hearing alone. The second set are taught the same information, but using only their sight. The third set are taught using both hearing and sight.

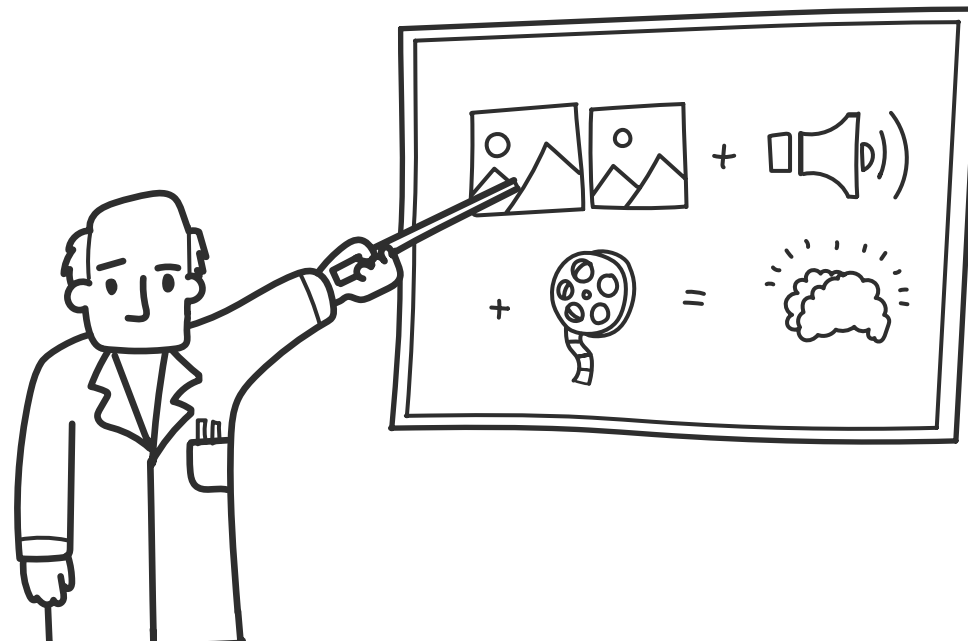
Who learns the most? Who learns the best? Each time Mayer ran this experiment, the students taught in multisensory environments outperformed their peers. They had more accurate recall, their recall had better resolution, and they retained the information for longer.



Mayer also discovered that:

- People learn best when corresponding words and pictures are presented closely together
- People learn better from animation and narration than from animation and on-screen text
- People learn better when extraneous material is excluded i.e. the simpler the better

As you'll notice, These are pretty much the central tenets of video scribing.





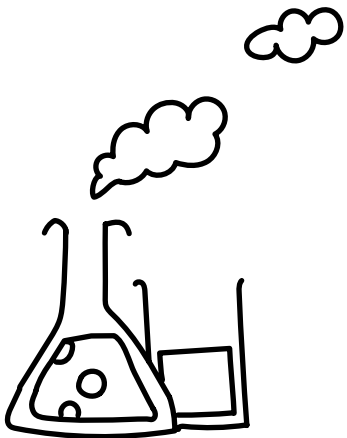
Scribes are multisensory

Watching a scribe is a multisensory experience, which results in much better understanding and retention. A scribe reveals information gradually, sparking your curiosity and allowing you to process the information bit by bit.

The viewer completion effect kicks in. You process the message at a deeper level and crucially, you're more likely to remember it – and respond.

That's what Sean James discovered to his amazement.

And that's what Sparkol found when they conducted their own tests of the whiteboard video style.



Chapter 6

Scribe videos versus talking heads

(Or how the closing bell was only the start for one US worker)

Sparkol, makers of the software VideoScribe, decided to put whiteboard animation to the test. They pit it against a talking head video. Straight up, gloves off, no funny business.

Sparkol sent 2,000 viewers either a talking head video or a scribe at random in a blind A/B test.

In both videos, the same business coach made the same pitch for new clients. Two videos – one talking head, one scribe. But exactly the same audio, exactly the same length and exactly the same pitch. You'd expect a similar impact, right?

After watching the video, the participants answered a set of questions about what they had seen, testing their comprehension, retention of information, enjoyment, and how likely they were to respond.

Sparkol suspected that the scribe video would have the edge.

But it didn't.

It had the whole shebang.

The hard facts of scribing

The scribe video outperformed the talking head video at every level.¹⁶

- Those who had seen the scribe performed better in 4 out of 5 memory tests
- The scribe video was three times more likely to be shared
- The scribe video was over twice as likely to be recommended
- 4 out of 10 scribe viewers would have bought the service described in the video – twice as many as the talking head viewers

The scribe video came out on top in all age brackets and for both sexes.

Beyond the power of video, beyond the effect of multimedia presentation, there is something about whiteboard-style animation that gets through to people.

Sparkol regularly hear from people who have won competitions with scribe videos. Winners like Mark Lawler, whose elevator pitch scribe was chosen from hundreds of entrants to promote Infoblox. It won him an all-expenses-paid trip to ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange.



Mark is a convert. He now has his own YouTube channel, where he publishes regular scribe videos.¹⁷

It's over to you

Scribing is bigger than ever and being used in every sector you can think of. When popular tech blog Mashable told the history of Facebook to mark the social network's tenth birthday – they did it with a scribe.

Illustrators use it to showcase their work. Schools use it to make exciting educational resources, flip classrooms and stimulate the next generation of IT-literate students. Corporations use it to speak to their employees in a way that entertains and informs, and small businesses use it to get their voices heard in the crowd.

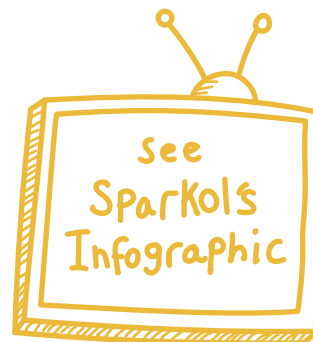
People the world over are discovering that scribing lets them give voice to the thoughts and ideas that might not otherwise be heard. It can turn your scribbled thoughts into a powerful message and write it in the sky.

Ten-year olds can do it. Harried schoolteachers can do it. Charity workers can do it.

So can you.

Where once we drew pictures on the cave wall for a few of our kin to see, we now have the whole world just a few clicks and shares away.

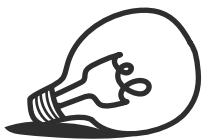
The question is – what will you scribe?



Part Two

How to make compelling scribe videos





You've got a story in mind.

You've got an invention or a bugbear or a lesson plan or a pitch or a manifesto or a proposition.

You want to scribe it beautifully, scribe it boldly all over the internet, all over the planet. You want to make a difference.

But how?

Now, in the second part of this book, you'll find out.

We've created a simple guide to making mind-blowingly brilliant scribe videos.

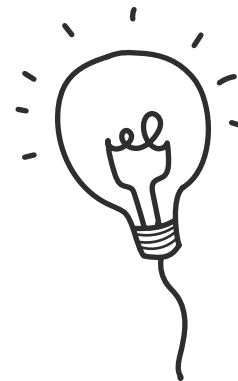
Whether you decide to commission TruScribe, use VideoScribe, or craft your own stop-motion animations by hand, this is a straightforward how-to.

In it, we'll look at writing your story, perfecting your script and delivering it with crescendo, razzmatazz and substance in all the right places. You'll find advice on recording pitch-perfect audio and choosing a standout soundtrack. Finally, we'll see how positioning your images can create flow, a sense of direction and ultimately, win your audience.

We've seen a lot of good scribe videos in our day, but not all of them have been extraordinary. Making a simple scribe is easy, but making a show-stopper can take a bit of practice.

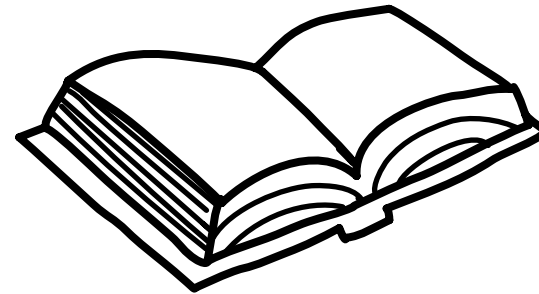
So if you've heard the stories of Karin Berg, Frontier Elementary School and Sir Ken Robinson, and you know you've got something to scribe, we hope you digest, exploit and share this guide.

It's time to get your story heard.



Chapter 7

Focus on the story



Once upon a time...

First things first. Your scribe needs to tell a story. It's the best way to give your audience a sense of who you are as an organisation or what you're about as a person.

In her book *Resonate*, Nancy Duarte says:

*'Creating desire in the audience, and then showing how your ideas fill that desire, moves people to adopt your perspective. This is the heart of a story.'*¹⁸

It is your story that will allow your scribe to rise above the multitude or get through to the teenagers in your classroom. The internet is teeming with video. 100 hours are uploaded to YouTube every minute. Six billion hours are watched on YouTube every month.

What you need is a hook, a USP, a little *je ne sais quoi*.

An amazing discovery or fact? A problem posed then solved? Or how about a hero?

Example - hold out for a hero

If you think about it, almost every famous story follows this structure:

1. Take one likeable hero
2. Present the hero with a challenge
3. Show them overcome their challenge and emerge transformed

Your hero might be your customer. You could focus on the problems she – let's call her Penelope – faced before she knew about your product or service. Just look how different life is for Penelope now!

Or your hero might be Brains in IT. He recognised the key challenge you faced as an organisation and here's how he helped you conquer it. It's the story of his 'eureka!' moment.

As a teacher, your hero might be Alexander Fleming or Ian Fleming or Victor Fleming or your students themselves.

Just make sure you give your audience a beginning, middle and end – and of course, all the important stuff in between.

Shout about what makes you special

So once you have your hero, you'll need a plot. We'll look at the art of scripting in Chapter 8, but here are some important points to consider in your initial brainstorm.

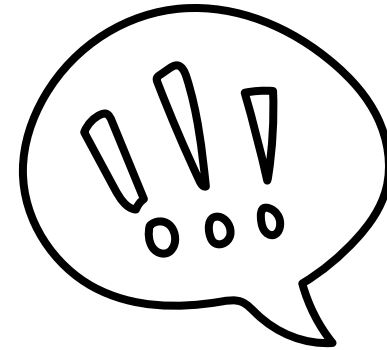
The most important thing is to make your audience part of the story – like Penelope or Brains or Mr Fleming's protégés in your classroom.

Answer their questions 'what's in it for me?' and 'why should I bother?' as soon as possible. Otherwise they'll switch off. Pronto.

Unless what your business does is very niche, it may take a little bit of digging to define your unique selling point (USP). But it can be the difference between mediocrity and magnificence.

And even if you're not scribbling for business purposes, you still need to explain why your message needs to be heard. Or why the viewer shouldn't go back to those seriously cute kitten videos he was watching earlier.

It may be that you are the best at something obvious – value, quality or customer service – in which case, congratulations! You have a clear USP to shout from the rooftops.



If it takes a little more thought, here are a few handy hints for a gleaming USP:

- Research your target audience and decide what their major motivators are likely to be. Imagine what your typical customer might look like and try to speak to them with your videos.
- Find out what makes customers choose your products rather than your competitors. Emphasise those characteristics in your video.
- Visit your competitors' sites and go through the process of buying their products or services. Check industry forums, read reviews and ask around. What do people find irritating? What fails to meet their expectations? Make sure you meet those needs. Do it better – and advertise the fact.
- Write down all of the things that are important to you as a business. Keep cutting the list down until you are left with your core values. Then define your promise and make it your slogan. Proclaim it loud and clear. And deliver.

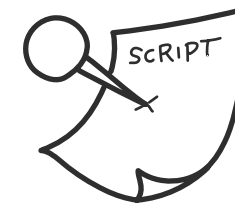
Call your audience to action

Finally, you'll want to make it crystal clear what you want people to do after watching your scribe video.

It's a cruel reality, but most people don't bother following up on things they've watched. They'll move on to that video of a dog riding an elephant or switch the kettle on or answer the door.

Chapter 8

Recipe for the perfect script



Once you've thought about what you want to say, it's time to work out how to say it.

The first thing you notice about most scribe videos are the images. Of course. But that isn't where you need to start. The script is the backbone of any great scribe.

Here are our top tips for making yours dazzle:

- Know your message. This sounds obvious but unless you have a clear idea of what you are trying to say, your audience won't either. Stick to one message for each scribe e.g. 'This one explains what we do', 'this one tells people about our current offer', 'this one teaches the active voice'.
- Set the tone. Should it be urgent, reassuring, funny? The tone or voice will influence how the script is written and starts you thinking about the kind of voiceover you'll use.
- Be clear. Your information needs to be clearly organised. Videos can easily be bogged down by trying to talk about too many things. Make a list of all the things that you want to say and then cut anything that isn't essential or directly relevant to your viewer.

Learning from the experts

The dating website Match.com is a great example of a company telling beautiful and clever stories to build its brand. Let's take a look at a script for one of their advertisements. In it, we meet a woman called Helen, who says:

“

*It's always nice to be asked out on a date, for it to go from a message from somebody to actually meeting a person. It's really exciting. Within the first few minutes of meeting the person, for me, I would know if I had chemistry with them. It would be nice if it were something that led to another date*¹⁹

”

The voiceover is informal, unpolished and personal. But don't be fooled – it knows its audience. This is just one person's dating experience but it suggests what others can expect. It creates an assumed intimacy – a sense of trust that casts the viewer as a character in Helen's story.

Match.com could have led with cold, hard – and impressive – facts. They could have said that they have 15 million users or that two-thirds of UK singles have tried online dating or that Christmas is the best time to get a date. But this more aggressive approach could have fallen flat.

Instead, they drew people in with a personal story. With an everyday and understated heroine.

The advertisement ends with the company's key slogan: It all starts with a date at Match.com. More relationships and more marriages than any other site. A subtle and positive call to action and a canny reminder of the company's name, website and USP.

But I'm not selling anything!

As we've seen, every story needs a hero or indeed, an army of heroes. So if you're using scribe videos to communicate any kind of message, these central concepts – simplicity, voice and clarity – still apply.

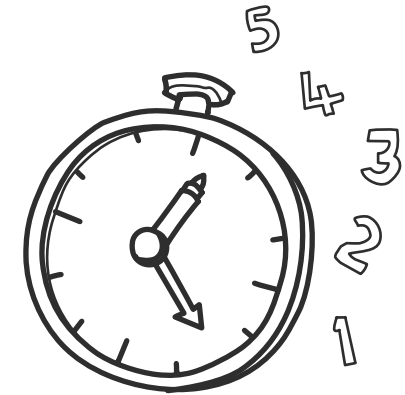
Using these principles, scribing will allow you to introduce your students to Pythagoras the man, animate his theory, answer questions and set their homework.

Likewise, if you're campaigning against a bad move by the city council, you want to make your points precisely and give a pared-down pitch.

All the way, you want to keep your story crisp, pithy and memorable. And once you've perfected it, it's time to plan your imagery. Because, as they say, images maketh the scribe.

Chapter 9

Timing is everything



Time is money. Timing can be, too.

In creating a whiteboard animation, you want to grab people's attention quickly, while giving your images time to shine.

For a successful approach to time in your scribe videos, apply these golden rules:

Make the first 5 seconds count

The first five seconds of your video are by far and away the most important. People only commit to watching something they know will be useful or entertaining. Make it clear right from those opening seconds what your message is and why it matters.

This rule is so important that it's been built into YouTube advertising. If you pay to have your advert shown before a video starts, it will play for five seconds before the viewer has the option to skip it and move on.

You have five seconds to recruit your viewer – and make them part of your story.

Keep it short

The biggest mistake a new scribe can make is to make a video excessively long.

Your viewer simply doesn't want to sit through a 10-minute video when one minute will do. Explainer videos between one and two minutes long are the most effective at keeping viewers engaged.

That said, as ever, you need to know your audience. When the RSA animated Sir Ken Robinson's talk, they needed 11 minutes 41 seconds. 11 million people felt it was worth watching.

Know your audience. Know your purpose. Set yourself a time limit accordingly.

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Create a flow

So by this point, you've got your hero. You've got your plot. Now you need to let them flow. But not all over the shop.

Sketching out a storyboard will allow you to create narrative and structure your scribes. You can use it to plan out what you want the viewer to see at each point and why. You can make sure it has suitable pace and allows time for viewer completion. (For more about this amazing phenomenon, pop back to Chapter 4).

Whether you're using software like VideoScribe or physically recording the progression of

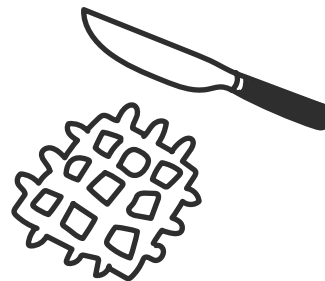
your scribe, moving the camera around the canvas – focussing on one image at a time – will keep the story moving. It's the visual equivalent of bullet points, but far more stylish!

Just be careful to get a good balance between movement and keeping the camera stationary. Staying still too long risks making your scribe look static and too busy with images, but on the other hand, too much movement can look frenetic and over the top.

Time your elements

Lastly, make sure you think about how long it takes your images to draw on the canvas. Depending on how complicated your images are, you may need to vary the pace and set some images to draw more quickly or slowly than others.

It's best to consider the flow and pace of your scribe when first creating your image, setting each within your overall storyboard. This will keep your scribe sharp, cut the waffle and ensure maximum impact.



Chapter 10

Working with voiceover



Bring out the big guns

Depending on your vision, you may want to consider hiring a professional voiceover artist to record your message.

People have a lower tolerance for poor quality audio than for less-than-marvellous visuals, and a professional recording may add credibility to your video and content.

Do It Yourself

However, it's more than possible to produce a strong voiceover yourself. Here's how.

1. Practice makes perfect

Read your final script aloud again and again – and again, for good measure. Make sure you can deliver it within the time available and in the right tone of voice.

Practise in front of anyone who'll listen and if they don't understand anything, change it.

2. *Setting up*

Find yourself a suitable microphone. If you're using the built-in microphone on your computer, speak at a natural level to avoid clipping the sound.

Find a quiet and echoless room where you won't be interrupted. You want a natural and noise-free recording.

Test your microphone by recording just a few lines first. If you need to, change the levels and adjust how far you're sitting from the microphone.

3. *Recording vocals and editing*

When you're ready, press record and start reading from your script. Just like a TV presenter, sitting or standing up straight and talking with a smile on your face will make you sound enthusiastic and convincing.

If you're happy with the overall quality of your recording, stick it straight into your scribe – job done!

If you know you slipped on a few words or want to remove any long pauses, use an editing programme like Audacity to get it shipshape.²⁰

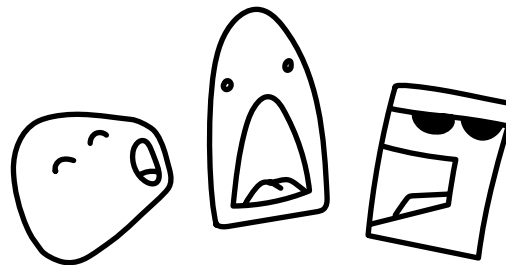
4. Finding the right balance

Once you have imported your audio – from your professional actor or top-notch amateur – into your scribe, play it through a few times and adjust the volume of your recording.

It's good practice to review the level of your audio against your scribe fairly often. Overly loud audio can be an unpleasant shock and likewise, audio that is too quiet can greatly reduce your video's impact.

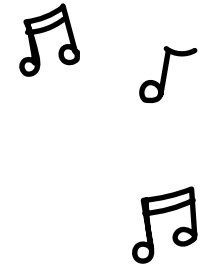
You may decide to use a backing track for your scribe. (You'll find more information about music in Chapter 11). It should always sit just lower in volume than your voiceover audio, so it doesn't distract from your message.

Test the sound through a variety of speakers. Play the scribe to your long-suffering friends and family again! Play and review it again for good measure.



Chapter 11

Music to scribe by



Choosing the right music can be the difference between a *blah* scribe and one that will stick fast in your mind. Music can inspire, motivate and mesmerize. Or it can drive you crazy.

So how do you get it right?

Choose your tune

Again, it is about knowing your audience and confidently setting the tone. What is the mood or emotion you want to conjure?

Upbeat, happy songs with positive lyrics scream summer holidays. Slower beats, minor keys and longer melodies can send you headlong into wistful nostalgia or bluesy meditation.

Older people might enjoy a track from their youth, but younger viewers may instantly engage with a song that currently tops the charts.



In 2007, chocolate legends Cadburys launched a now iconic advert. Picture a large gorilla playing the drums to the Phil Collins track ‘In the Air Tonight’.²¹

It was genius. The classic rock song hinted at Cadburys’ heritage and status as a British institution. The surreal visuals, combined with the company’s signature purple, worked perfectly. Adults who have grown up with Cadburys got it. Children and young people got it. Phil Collins fans got it. It was a winner.

If you’re musically minded, you can – of course – use your own compositions to give your scribes the edge. In the past, jingles were all the rage. These days it might be better to develop a theme or signature song, which is rather less in-your-face.

If necessary, loop the loop

Once you’ve chosen your music, think about its length.

For a very short video, you can always pick out part of a song. Taking the hook of a catchy tune will help people remember your product along with it.

For anything longer, use a loop. In VideoScribe the music is written to repeat perfectly and the loop function included in the software. If you’re sourcing your own music for a longer scribe, you’ll just need to work out how to loop that too without breaking that all-important flow.



Play it by the book

Always be careful when choosing music that isn't your own. Even if the band or artist isn't well known, make sure you get permission to use their work or you risk having your videos taken down for copyright infringement.

If you're using VideoScribe, you'll be pleased to note that the music tracks are all free and composed especially for your use.

Whether or not you can afford original music or a famous song, it's always best to go for something that fits the feel and ethos of your product, service or message as closely as possible. With any luck, your viewers will be humming it all day long.



Chapter 12

Clever layouts

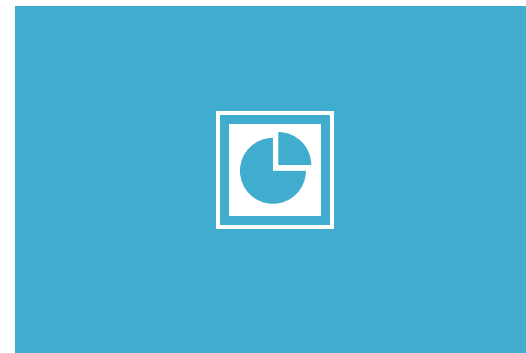
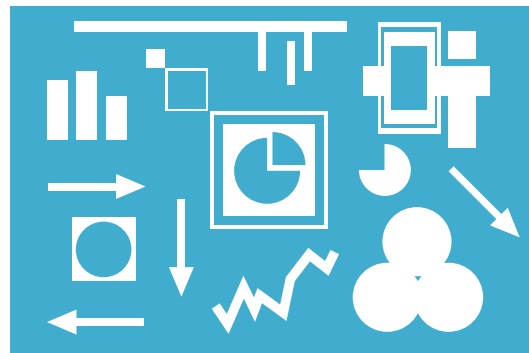
So, your hero has a plot, and your plot has a soundtrack. Now's the time to lay out your story on canvas.

Skilful layout is a must and will take your scribe from knocked-together to knockout in no time.

Here are our five essential tips for making your scribes attractive and clutter-free.

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Let it breathe



The best scribes give images and text space to breathe.

Information is easily lost in a busy scribe. Too many images and chunks of text make it hard for the viewer to work out what's important. Keep your visuals stripped back and crisp.

Establish a hierarchy

Create a layout hierarchy to make sure that your most important points – and their accompanying images – are represented most clearly. You can enhance a particular image by changing its size, colour, position on the screen and the number of other visible elements around it.

In simple terms, the bigger the image compared to everything else on screen, the more it is going to stand out.



And more generally, keeping things minimal is a great way to create a hierarchy. Isolated images will get a lot more attention than if they are surrounded by clutter.



You could also use an accent colour to make your main image more prominent.



Remember that people will try to read a whiteboard animation in the same way they would read a normal presentation.

We are used to seeing titles at the top of the page, so consider putting important information there. Text or images at the bottom of the screen may be confused with the small print that people normally skip over.



Work towards the bigger picture

Using images and text to build up bigger pictures bit by bit is an effective scribing technique. It will strengthen your narrative and communicate your overall message far more powerfully than presenting everything at once.

Move your story along

In telling your story, movement from frame to frame is key.

You can make the camera move to the right to show the story progressing. Your scribe might travel from left to right with each new point. As most of us read from left to right, this will appear logical and linear. It will give your scribe the feel of a journey with a beginning, middle and end.

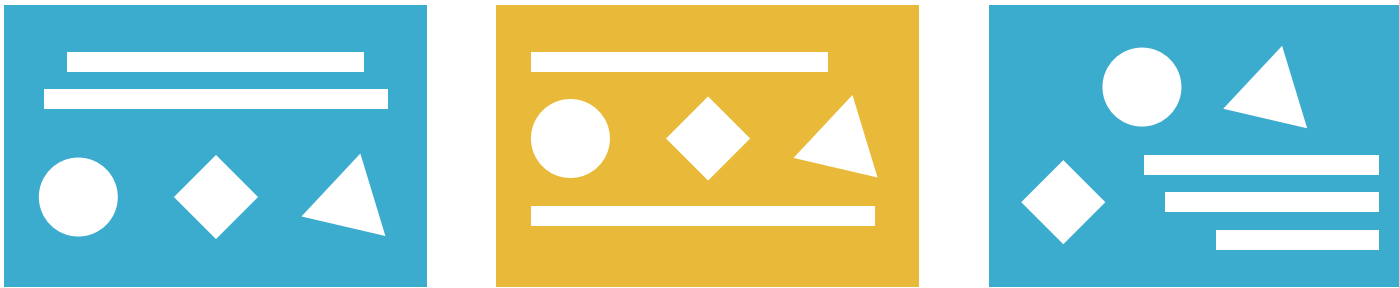
It also looks good if you move from scene to scene in simple lines. Choose your direction and go the same way – left, right, up or down – each time.

On the other hand, you might want your scribe to move all over the place, and that certainly can work– it's just a little trickier to perfect. But if you're bold and brilliant enough to pull it off – respect to you!

Align your lines

If you have several scenes in your scribe, it will look more professional if all your text is lined up in each one. If your text is centred in one scene, don't make it left aligned in the next.

You want to make it as easy as possible for your viewer to find and process information.



If in doubt, keep it simple. Think about the images and moments you want to pop and how, and have fun perfecting your sparkling imagery.

Final word

Your time to scribe

So you've got the know-how, and you've seen just a little of video scribing's endless potential.

Now it's your turn.

To make your own whiteboard animations, visit www.sparkol.com for a free and no-obligation seven-day trial of VideoScribe. It's easy-to-use and comes packed with images and music that you can use commercially.

The Sparkol blog – blog.sparkol.com – has tonnes of tutorials, tips and inspiration for making your own scribes.

For professional video services, we recommend www.truscribe.com, where you'll discover a wealth of ideas and meticulous, mesmerizing hand-drawn videos.

We hope you've enjoyed this tour of the ever-expanding video scribing universe.

We're excited to hear your stories and to see your scribes emblazoned across the world.

Authors

Jon Air and team, Sparkol

Jon established Sparkol in 2008 to empower people to communicate more effectively through simple tools. VideoScribe is the fruit of this ethos.

VideoScribe users are able to create engaging scribe video animations quickly and easily without the need for technical ability or design know-how. With over 100,000 scribes made each month, VideoScribe is helping its users produce incredible content worldwide.

www.sparkol.com

Eric Oakland, CIO at TruScribe

Since launching its first scribe video in January 2011, TruScribe has looked to its Scribology™ method of video scribing to guide the use of style, medium and technology to present clients' messages clearly.

Based in principles of neuroscience, Scribology™ seeks to improve the efficiency of knowledge transfer and depth of retention. Everything TruScribe does is scrutinised through this lens to maintain standards of quality over hundreds of hand-drawn videos.

www.truscribe.com

Chipp Walters, communications expert

With a background in Industrial Design, Chipp's passion for communication and problem-solving has served him well.

Chipp has led a number of design companies, and worked on the design for many of the first computers including IBM, Dell, and Apple. He also headed the team who designed the first Initial Lunar Habitat for NASA, followed by a Mars Habitat concept.

Critical to the success of all those projects was the ability to communicate his ideas succinctly, a skill that has proved useful with his independent scribing business.

blog.chipp.com

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Thanks for reading.

Who do you know who would love this book?

